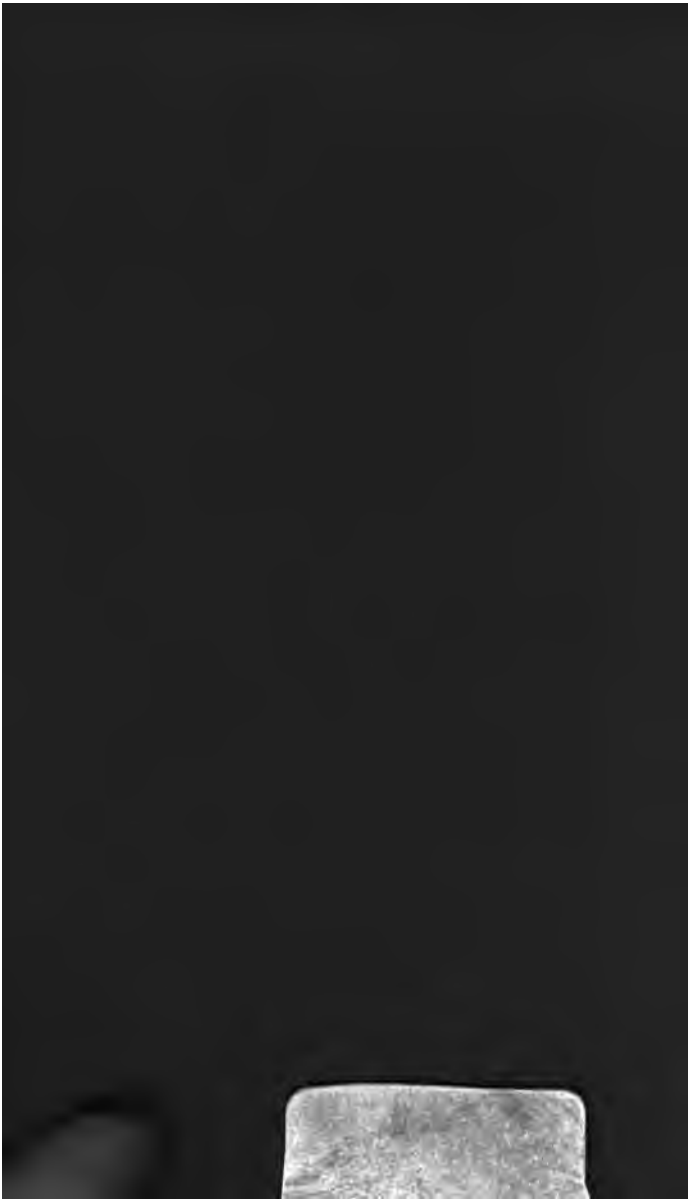

Out at Sea,

AND OTHER STORIES.

BY TWO AUTHORS.

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OUT AT SEA.

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JEM and his little sister Kate were at play on the beach one summer's afternoon. There was a cave in the rocks, which they called their house, and in it they kept their stores of shells and stones. The floor of the cave was of fine, soft sand, and there were low rocks which served for seats in it. Here Jem and Kate passed many hours at play, both on fine days and wet ones; for, if it rained, they were safe out of the wet, and if it did not, there was a nice shade for them from the sun.

There had been a storm the night before,

but now it was fine again, and the sun shone out brightly. The shore was strewed with shells and seaweed, which had been brought up by the waves; and Jem, and Kate were very busy picking them up, and carrying them to their cave. In a rock close by, there was a pool of water; and here the children washed their shells and seaweed, till all the sand was out of them, and they were quite clean. Then they took them into the cave, and played games with them; and at last they ranged them on a ledge of the rock, where they kept their treasures, out of reach of the tide.

Some way off, on the beach, lay a boat, which had been left there.

'Do you see that boat, Kate?' asked Jem, as he lay idly on the sand.

'Yes,' said Kate. 'I think it belongs to old Ben.'

'Let us have a new game,' said Jem. 'I've been thinking of one.'

'Oh, yes, do!' cried Kate. 'What is it?'

'I will go and live in that boat,' said Jem, 'and be a bear. And you must be a little child, you know, and be walking along the sands, and pretend you don't know there is a bear in this place. And then I shall pounce out on you, and carry you off to my den,—which is the boat, you know,—and you must scream, and cry, and beg me not to eat you.'

'And shall you eat me?' asked Kate; 'or shall you be a kind bear, and spare me, as I am such a wee child?'

'I don't quite know. I shall see,' said Jem.

'All right,' said Kate. 'But you must not be too rough, Jem.'

Then Kate went to the cave, and made believe it was her home, and she stood at the entrance and said aloud, 'I think I shall go out.'

And Jem went and got into the boat, and crouched down in it as if to hide.

'Goodbye, mother!' cried Kate, as she came out of the cave, pretending to speak to some one in it; and then she went down to the water's edge, and walked along, looking out at the sea, and singing to herself.

She came towards the boat, and seemed not to see it, nor the bear, who was crouching in it. But, just as she had passed it, out jumped the bear, with a great growl; and Kate cried out, 'O mother, mother! save me!' and ran as fast as she could. But the bear caught her, and held her fast, and roared at her; and then he pulled her to his den, growling gruffly all the way there.

And Kate cried, 'Oh good bear, please don't eat a poor little, thin child, like me! If you will only spare me, I'll be the best little girl to you that ever was known!'

'What will you do for me?' growled Mr. Bear.

'I will clean your house, and cook your

food, and brush your coat, and tickle your ears for you,' said Kate. 'Kind bear, do spare!'

'As you made a rhyme at the end of your speech, I will,' said the bear. 'A rhyme brings good luck, you see.'

'Then I will rhyme, each time!' said Kate; and this pleased the bear so much, that he told her she might cook his dinner at once.

Then he lay down at one end of the boat, and shut his eyes, and Kate pretended to get his dinner ready. It was so hot, and Jem was so tired, that he did really go to sleep; and he slept on, until he was awoke by a cry from Kate, who had been sitting in the bottom of the boat, playing with some pebbles.

'O Jem!' she cried, 'wake up! look! the boat is loose, and we are on the sea!'

'Nonsense!' cried Jem, and he jumped up in a great hurry.

It was as she said. The boat was floating on the water. The rope which had tied it to a little wooden post on the shore had got loose somehow; and when the tide was up, the boat rocked on the waves, and went farther and farther from the land.

'O what shall we do, Jem!' cried Kate, 'what shall we do!' and she sobbed, and wept, and wrung her hands.

Jem did not cry, but his face grew quite white with fear, as the boat still went out and out with each wave, farther, and more far away. The sea was rough, and the little boat bobbed up and down, first on one side, and then on the other, and the water splashed up round it, and more than once splashed in Kate's face, as she sat in the bottom of the boat. There were no oars, or Jem would perhaps have tried to row her back to the shore. What was to be done?

Jem sat down by Kate, and put his arm round her.

'Don't cry, dear,' he said. 'God will take care of us.'

'Do you think He sees us now?' Kate asked, through her tears.

'Of course He does,' said Jem.

'Then speak to Him, please, Jem,' said Kate, 'and ask Him to take us back to the land,—quick! for I am so afraid we shall be drowned.'

Then Jem knelt down in the boat, and asked God to look on them, and bring them safe out of their danger; and Kate dried her tears, for Jem said he was quite *sure* that God heard what he said. He did feel rather frightened himself, it is true; but he kept up a brave heart, for little Kate's sake, and he held her fast to keep her safe, as the boat tossed up and down.

They went on like this, a long, long time, and no help came. The children began to feel hungry, and to want their supper. They were so far from the land now, that

their cottage only looked like a speck on the shore.

'What will mother say?' whispered Kate to Jem, after they had been silent for a long while.

'Yes, indeed!' said Jem. 'Father's out to-day fishing. If we could only meet his boat!'

'O dear, I hope we shall!' said Katie. 'Do you think we shall?'

'Well, we may,' said Jem. But he did not feel very sure about it.

'What makes those little white waves, over there?' asked Katie presently.

'Where?' asked Jem.

Jem looked where she pointed.

'It is a rock, just under the water,' he said; and his face grew paler. 'The water breaks upon it, and those little white waves are called breakers.'

'I hope we shall not go near it, then,' said Kate; but Jem did not answer, for he saw

that the current was taking the boat towards the hidden rocks, and he knew there was danger, if she should knock up against them, of their making a hole in her side. Then the water would rush in, and the boat would sink; and what could save them then?

The sun set, and the evening began to close in. Still the boat tossed up and down, and there was no help in sight. Kate had left off crying now; she was quite worn out with fear and grief. She laid her head on Jem's shoulder, and closed her eyes.

It seemed to Jem as if the help that he had prayed for would never come. He strained his eyes to see, as it grew darker and darker. They had passed the breakers, quite close; that was one danger over. Again he lifted up his heart to God, and asked Him to send help soon.

What was that he saw, first small, a long way off, like a large bird upon the water?

Surely it was a boat, with the moonlight shining on its white sails, and making them look like wings! It came nearer and grew larger: yes, it was a boat. Jem gave a cry of joy, which startled Kate, who was half asleep.

'A boat! a boat! Do you see it, Kate?' he cried eagerly.

'Yes, it is! Oh Jem, let us call and shout to it!'

They called and shouted with all their might; and there was a shout at last, in answer, from the fishing boat. And who do you think was in that boat?

The father of Jem and Kate, and Ben, who had gone out fishing together. You may think how surprised they were, to find Jem and Kate alone in a boat on the sea so far from home.

'My poor little bairns!' said the father, as he lifted Kate out of the boat into his own.

She clung with both her arms round his neck, and cried for joy.

Then Ben lifted Jem out, and tied the empty boat to the other with a rope, to tow it back. And the father gave the children some bread and cheese which he had brought with him; and glad enough they were to have it, for they were as hungry as could be.

'However came you out here?' asked the father, as they went on their way homewards.

Then Jem told him all about it; and Ben said, 'Don't you ever get into an empty boat again, for fun!'

And Jem said, 'I don't think I shall, in a hurry!'

And Kate cried, 'I never will!'

The poor mother, at home, meanwhile was in great trouble. She could not think why her children did not come in. She went out on the beach, and called, and

called in vain; and she went to the cave to seek for them, but they were not there.

Then she went and asked a neighbour to come and help her to look for them; and they searched in every place they could think of. At last the neighbour said, 'What has become of Ben's boat?'

Then they both saw that it was gone, and a fear of what had happened came upon them.

The poor mother went back to her home and wept, and her neighbour tried to comfort her. But while she was trying to do so, they heard voices on the beach; and Jem's father cried, 'Here we all are, safe and sound, thank God!'

Then they ran out, and saw Jem and Kate, and the father, and Ben.

You may think how great the mother's joy was, and how she kissed and hugged her darling children.

As they went upstairs to bed that night,

Jem said to Kate, 'I told you that God could see us, and hear what I said. He made father come and find us.'

'How good He is!' said Kate. 'I shall thank Him, as long as I live, for this!'

TRUANT HARRY.

TRUANT HARRY.

'MY dear, hasn't your school begun yet? Certainly you have a long spell at Easter! In *my* young days I never had such holidays!'

'No, mother,' answered a pretty little boy of about ten years of age; 'we don't begin till Monday.'

'Well, I'm sure there seems to be nothing but holidays,—one day you go to school, the next day you don't,—it's hard enough to scrape the money to pay for it weekly;' and saying these words, Mrs. Martin re-entered her cottage.

She was a hard-working woman, and had

a large family of children, the eldest of whom was fifteen, and Harry, the boy to whom she had been speaking, next in age. Some days she went out charring at the vicar's house, and the rest of her week she spent in washing. Her eldest daughter, a girl of twelve, minded the house and the three younger ones while her mother was at work; and a good little housekeeper she was.

Directly her mother went away, which was about a quarter to eight in the morning, Agnes dressed the little ones, and left the baby crowing and playing with his rattle in the cradle. Then she got the breakfast ready; for her eldest brother, Jack, came in from his work at the foundry at eight for his breakfast, and had to be away again at half-past; and Henry had to walk a quarter of a mile and be at school by nine o'clock. The twins, Bobby and Lucy, who were four years old, went to an infant school close to their home.

On this morning Mrs. Martin had just set off to her work, and Agnes was busy seeing about things; but somehow the little ones were troublesome, baby was cross, and, worse than all, the fire wouldn't burn. She was on her knees in front, blowing it gently with the bellows.

'You s'ant have it, I tell you,—you s'ant,' came from the inner room.

'I s'all, you are velly untind!' exclaimed another little voice. 'I s'all play with it if I like, ugly old doll!'

''Tisn't ugly,'—slap, slap, sounded from the room. Then followed a scuffle and a cry.

Agnes dropped the bellows, and ran to put a stop to the squabbling. She found Bobby with his face very red, holding the wooden doll high above his head, and Lucy trying with all her little might to pull his arm down, but Bobby, being the strongest, held it out of her reach.

Instead of giving them each a good slap, as some little girls might do, Agnes went up to the two, and said very gravely, 'Bobby, I'm ashamed of you for teasing your sister. Give me her doll directly. How can you be so unkind!'

'I only wanted to wash its face, the ugly old thing, 'cos it was all covered with black; and then she got into a temper. Take it, I don't want it,' and he poked it into his sister's arm.

Agnes took it away.

'No,' said she, 'you mustn't have it until you are good; and Bobby, you must stay here alone till breakfast is ready;' and taking Lucy by the hand, she went out of the bedroom, Lucy with her pinafore up to her eyes, sobbing loudly because she might not have her doll.

Agnes let her cry for some time without taking any notice, but at last, because she went on so long, she said to her, 'If

you go on crying, Lucy, and show so much temper, I won't let you have it all day; so you had better dry your eyes and come and help me.'

Lucy began to think that perhaps it would be the best thing she could do; so, slowly wiping the tears from her cheeks, she came to her sister, who gave her a piece of bread to toast; and when breakfast was ready, both the little ones were good again.

When it was finished, Agnes washed their faces and hands, and taking baby in her arms, off they went to school. Coming back, she met a girl called Sarah Jenkins, with her little sister in her arms, and the two children began to talk.

'I say, Agnes, by and by, may I come in with Polly and sit with you a bit? Father has gone to Compton, and mother's at the Hall about some scrubbing, 'cos the squire and his lady are coming home; and

the day they come, oh Agnes, we shall have such fun! We children are to go up there to welcome them, and have some tea. Won't you be glad?'

'Yes,' answered Agnes, 'I daresay it will be fun. But I shan't be able to go, for mother is out nearly every day, and I must look after baby.'

'Oh! bother the baby; can't you put him with some one for that afternoon? I mean to put Polly. Fancy giving up the treat for that!' and Sarah laughed out loud.

'You can do what you like, Sarah,' said Agnes, getting very red. 'I don't mean to put my baby with any one; so I shan't go.'

'Oh, you can please yourself. My! what tantrums you get in!' and Sarah walked off, leaving her friend to go on her way alone.

Agnes felt very cross. She wanted to go to the treat. It had been long talked of in

the village; and the young squire and his bride were to have the best welcome the villagers could give them. Poor Agnes!

She often had disappointments, but none of them had been so hard to bear as this one. All the children, boys and girls, were to go up to the Park and to have tea, and they were to make evergreen arches to go over the gates. Oh how she wished she could go! She walked along, dwelling on her disappointment, and thought how unfortunate she always was, when suddenly a kind hand was laid on her shoulder, and a voice said, 'What are you thinking of, my child, with such a grave face?'

Agnes started violently, and then made a low curtsey, for it was the vicar, and young and old loved him dearly. She didn't like to tell him what her thoughts had been. But he saw that something was amiss, and his kind heart couldn't bear to think that one of his flock, even the smallest, was in

trouble. So he said, 'How is your mother to-day?'

'She is working at the vicarage, and quite well, thank you, sir.'

'Well, and the little ones?'

'All quite well, sir.'

'That's right! Now tell me, little woman, what's the matter with you?'

Her face crimsoned, but she at last managed to stammer out, 'I was only thinking I should like to go to the treat.'

'And why can't you?'

'Because I must mind baby, as mother will be out.'

'Oh that's a pity! Can't baby be taken care of by some one?'

'No, thank you, sir. I don't think mother would like it. She would be afraid something might happen to him.'

'Well then, never mind, my child! I daresay there will soon be another treat, and then perhaps you will be able to go;

but, of course, you are glad to help your mother, when she works so hard for all of you?'

'Yes, sir,' said Agnes slowly.

Mr. Cuthbert saw that she was very much disappointed, and he felt that she had so few pleasures it was only natural. Then he thought what he could do to make up for it to her. At last he said, 'Would you like to bring baby and come up to the vicarage to have a swing on Thursday?'

Agnes' face brightened wonderfully. It was almost as nice as the treat. She made a very low curtsey, and her voice sounded cheerfully as she thanked him; and she was still more pleased when he told her he was sure the cook would give them some tea.

'Oh! thank you, sir, so much,' said Agnes. 'I'm sure mother will let us go.'

Mr. Cuthbert smiled at her, and then went on his way; and Agnes found her work at

home got on so quickly that day, she could not think how it was. It was because she was so happy. She swept the room, put the potatoes on to boil, rocked her little brother to sleep, and then sat down to darn some socks. That she found rather difficult to do, for her brothers wore them out at the toes and heels, and so the feet looked little else but holes; but Mrs. Martin, who was a very good workwoman, never allowed them to be 'cobbled,' as many little girls are fond of doing, and Agnes had to mend them carefully. She had just finished two pairs, when her brothers came tearing in for their dinner. So she placed the potatoes, and some bread and cheese, on the table, and sat down.

Harry was in a troublesome mood. He said, 'I hate everlasting potatoes, and bread and cheese. We have that most every day.'

'Well!' answered his sister, 'you know, Harry, mother can't get us anything else.'

'No, you grumbler! I never saw such a fellow,' said Jack. 'Be thankful you've got any dinner to put into your mouth.'

'Very fine for you to talk,' answered Harry. 'Mother often gives you a bit of meat for supper, and I'm sure I want it quite as much;' and he stuck his fork into the largest potato he could see in the dish, and began eating as fast as he could.

Jack took no notice of his impertinence, except a muttered 'I'll lick you one of these days, when I've got time, you young rascal.'

Although the potatoes were so horrid, Harry managed to eat the largest share of them, and then, without saying his grace, he ran out into the street to play hockey with some other idle lads.

That evening, after Mrs. Martin had come home from her hard day's work, and was sitting tired out by her cottage door, the latch of the garden-gate was unfastened, and

the schoolmaster, Mr. Matthews, walked up the path.

'Good evening, Mrs. Martin,' said he.

'Good evening, sir,' she answered, as she rose from her seat.

'I came to know why Harry hasn't been to school. We began again last Wednesday. I was afraid he was ill, so came to inquire.'

'Why, sir!' answered Mrs. Martin, 'he told me school didn't begin until Monday, when I asked him. I couldn't think why the children had such long holidays. But perhaps he didn't know,' added she, for she couldn't bear to think her boy had told a lie.

'Will you call him, and ask him the question?' said the schoolmaster.

Mrs. Martin hurried into the cottage. Harry had heard his master's voice, so thought it wisest to get into bed. His mother went up to him.

'Harry,' said she, 'Mr. Matthews is here to

know why you haven't been at school. You told me it didn't begin until Monday.'

'Well, mother, I didn't know that it did. Jem Lee said it didn't. I'm sure I knew nothing about it.' But his voice trembled a little, for he thought of a thick cane in the cupboard in his mother's room, and how when he had been very little he had stolen a farthing from the table, and bought a farthing sugar-stick, and when his mother asked him if he had taken it, he said 'No,' but she found him out in the untruth, and had given him a whipping which he had not forgotten. She thought of that, too, and feared it was only too likely, as he had told one untruth, that he would tell another. She made no answer, but went out of the room into the porch to Mr. Matthews.

'He says he didn't know, sir. One of the boys told him school hadn't begun yet.'

'Oh, indeed,' said the master. 'You will be sure to send him to school on Monday.

It is a pity he didn't know. Good evening, Mrs. Martin.'

'Good evening, sir,' and the master was gone.

But he knew the boy, and guessed that this was a false excuse, and that Harry preferred play to school.

The next day was Sunday. All the family, even the baby, went to church. Jack and Harry were in the choir, and Mrs. Martin loved to hear her eldest boy's sweet voice in the anthem; and on this Sunday it sounded sweeter than usual. Her eyes filled with tears as she thought of how good he was to her, and how hard he had worked since his father died, to help her to get on. But he was a very delicate boy, and the neighbours used to say they thought he would go off, like his poor father, in a consumption. Even now the colour on his cheek was very bright and unnatural, and he had a cough that hurt him sometimes; yet he never complained,

and was his mother's greatest comfort and blessing.

After church, she waited for her boys, and Jack came up to her with his usual loving smile, and walked home with her; but as they mounted the hill, he put his hand in her arm, and rested heavily upon it. She turned round quickly, and looked at him.

'What is the matter, my darling?' said she.

'Nothing, mother,' and he laughed. 'Only I felt rather tired. Shall we stop a minute?'

'Why, you are quite out of breath!' she said.

'It's nothing,' said Jack; but his mother looked anxious.

He seemed tired all day, but was so bright that she began to think it was only passing fatigue.

Monday morning came, and Harry was sent to school. About eleven o'clock he

came home. His mother was washing in the back of the cottage.

'Why, Harry, what brings you home so early?' she asked when she saw him.

'Oh, mother, Mrs. Matthews is very ill, so we couldn't do much to-day.'

'Poor thing! I'm sorry for that. What is the matter with her?'

'Rheumatic fever, or something—I don't know;' and tossing down his books, out he ran to his playfellows.

Mrs. Martin never thought anything more about it, until the following Thursday when she was going on an errand for the vicar. On her way she met the schoolmaster. She curtseyed, and was passing by, when he stopped her.

'You have never sent Harry to school, after all, Mrs. Martin?'

She looked at him in amazement.

'Why, he has been every day since Monday, sir.'

'Indeed he hasn't, Mrs. Martin. He has not been once this week.'

'Oh! the bad boy!' said his poor mother. 'He told me—' and then she stopped, not wishing to tell of his untruths, yet making up her mind to give him a good caning when he came home from the treat.

'He shall go to-morrow, sir, for I'll bring him myself.'

'Yes, do, Mrs. Martin; for he ought to be taught how very wrong and deceitful it is of him to pretend to go to school, and then to play truant like this. I shall certainly punish him;' and so saying, he walked off.

Poor Mrs. Martin! Harry was the only one of her children who had given her trouble; but she knew it was better to punish him than allow him to grow up a wicked man. Her heart felt very heavy; she could not bear to think he had told such untruths, and had been so deceitful.

Agnes and the baby were quite happy in the vicar's garden, swinging and playing with some old dolls the little Miss Cuthberts had given them because they could not go to the treat. Baby crowed and laughed, and Agnes felt too pleased to talk. She could not help thinking how good and kind it was of Mr. Cuthbert to let her come; and then she remembered who it was that had allowed her to have the disappointment, and had put it into the kind clergyman's heart to make up for it. She enjoyed her tea, and went home feeling thankful and happy.

That evening Jack and Harry came home late together. Jack was looking very pale and tired, but with bright red spots burning on his cheeks, and his brown eyes looking larger than ever. Mrs. Martin called the younger children in, and put Bobby and Lucy to bed. She then told Harry she wanted him. His guilty conscience began to trouble him, and still more when he

heard his mother say to Jack, 'Why, my darling, how feverish you are!'

'I'm tired, mother dear,' he said shortly, and went up to bed.

Truth to tell, Harry had been out bird-nesting all day, and had climbed up a tree that overhung a deep stream which had a swift current. As he came down the tree with the nest in his hand, he slipped and fell in, and screamed for help. Jack, who was near, jumped in, and drew him out, but the exertion had been too much for him; and what with that and the wetting, he had been knocked up, and he was unable to play all day; so no wonder Harry's conscience pricked him, for he knew it was his fault his brother was not well.

'You go to bed, Agnes, child,' said Mrs. Martin; and then she shut the door, and said to Harry sternly, 'I met Mr. Matthews to-day, and he told me you had not been to school all the week.'

No answer.

'What have you got to say for yourself? Nothing? Yes, I think you had better hold your tongue, and not tell any more untruths.'

A sob, and then another, and another.

'Of course I shall cane you. I told you I would, the last time you told a lie;' and Mrs. Martin raised the cane, and let it descend pretty smartly across Harry's shoulders.

He screamed, and promised he would never do it again, but Mrs. Martin gave him two more cuts. As she raised the cane for another, her hand was stayed, and Jack said,

'Mother, that's enough! please forgive him this once.'

'No, Jack, he deserves it, and a good deal more; and I must do it.'

'Mother, I may never ask you to do anything again for me,' he pleaded.

Something in his tone of voice struck her, and she looked at him. She felt cold as the

thought came across her, 'Suppose he should die!' She said hurriedly,

'This once then, I'll forgive him, but never again. It will be a long time before I shall trust or believe him, now.' Then turning to Harry, she said, 'Go to your bed, sir, and don't let me hear you making any noise. I have forgiven you because your brother asked me.'

Then putting her arm round Jack, she made him go up to bed. But all that night she was with him, for he was delirious, and kept on calling to Harry to come down from the tree, and then fancied he was drowning.

In the morning he was so weak he could not move. The doctor came, but shook his head sorrowfully. He said that Jack might have lived for years, but he had taken cold, and his nerves had been much shaken. He could not give any hope.

Harry's grief was dreadful to see. Mr. Cuthbert tried to comfort him, but in vain.

He seemed broken-hearted, and could not bear to look at his mother's face of grief.

At the end of the week, Jack died. His death was very peaceful. He had been watching the sunset, and as the sun went down, he put his hands into his mother's, and said, 'I shall never see another, mother.'

She would not give way for fear of agitation, but she could not speak, and her eyes were full of tears. Jack lay quite still, and slept after that, and in his sleep his gentle spirit took its flight.

Harry's repentance was sincere, and he grew up to be a help and comfort to his mother.

VAIN RUTH.

VAIN RUTH.

GRACE and Ruth were great friends. They lived in the same street in a small country town, and used to join each other on school days, to go to school. Grace was nine years old, and Ruth was ten.

Ruth was a vain little girl. She thought a good deal about her dress and about being smart; and often when she passed the shops and saw the gay things hung in the windows, she would stop and wish for them, and long to be rich that she might buy them. There is no harm, of course, in liking bright and pretty things; but when this leads us

on to wish for what God does not see fit to let us have, it is wrong. And He, Who made some rich and some poor, knows what is best for each.

There was a fair held in the town in which Ruth and Grace lived, every three years; and it was looked forward to by all the children for a long time before. For there were all sorts of shows, and swings, and merry-go-rounds, and wild beasts in cages, and stalls of toys and sweets; and there was hardly a child in the place who did not manage to have its penny or halfpenny to spend at the fair, in one or the other.

The time for the fair had come, and there was a great stir in the quiet little town.

One morning, Grace said to Ruth, as they went to school together, 'Will you come with me to the fair when school is done?'

'Yes,' replied Ruth, 'as soon as I am dressed.'

'What do you mean?' asked Grace. 'You *are* dressed;' and she laughed.

'Oh dear, no!' cried Ruth, with a toss of the head. 'I am not going to the fair like this, I can tell you! I shall put on my best frock, and my new hat trimmed with green.'

'May you?' asked Grace, in surprise.

'I shall not ask,' said Ruth. For she knew quite well what her aunt would say if she did.

Mrs. Gray, the kind aunt who had taken care of Ruth ever since she was a baby, when her mother died, was a poor, hard-working woman, who did her best to keep herself and her little niece tidy and comfortable. She took a pride in Ruth, and always sent her to school and church looking nice and neat; but she was obliged to be very careful, and always charged Ruth to be the same, for it was but little she could spare out of her earnings for dress for either of them. This last Easter, how-

ever, she had laid by enough to buy Ruth a new hat, and some green ribbon for it; and great store was set by this hat, which only came out on fine Sundays, and was carefully put away again with the Sunday frock, from one week's end to another.

'Well,' said Grace, in answer to Ruth, 'I should like to wear my best, too, you know; but mother wouldn't hear of such a thing, so I shall go as I am, and enjoy it just as much. Do you know, Ruth, I have sixpence to buy things with. Only think!'

'Have you, really?' asked Ruth. 'How did you get so much?'

'Our Tom came in to see us,' said Grace, 'and gave it to me to spend at the fair. He works on the farm at the Lea now, you know.'

'I have fourpence,' said Ruth. 'I have been saving up ever since Christmas, on purpose to buy a brooch. There are such splendid brooches to be had for threepence

or fourpence on the stalls. I have set my heart on a brooch.'

'I don't think I care for a brooch so much,' said Grace. 'I shall buy lots of things with my sixpence.'

And so they talked until they got to school.

It is to be feared that there were a great many wandering thoughts in school-time that morning. Most of the children were thinking of going to the fair, and what they should see and buy there; and there were a good many little stray whispers about it.

When school was over, Ruth ran home as fast as she could. She knew that her aunt was out at work,—she had left the key of the door with Ruth, that she might go in between schools and have her dinner. This was a very quick business, and Ruth gobbled down her bread and cheese faster than usual, for her mind was full of other things. With her mouth still full, she ran upstairs and

pulled out from under the bed the box in which her Sunday frock and hat were. She put them on, and then peeped in the glass to see if she looked nice. Very nice, she thought to herself, admiring the green bow and ends; and especially so, after she had tied round her neck a half-dirty bit of pink ribbon, which one of her school-fellows had given her. She only wanted a brooch to make herself complete, she thought, as she ran down and locked the door after her.

Grace was waiting for her, looking very dowdy, Ruth said to herself; but so much the better for her, she thought, for Grace's old brown straw hat and shabby print only served to set off her smart dress. So they walked on together; and though Grace was dressed in her old things, her face wore a bright, happy smile, for she was thinking, not of herself, but of others, and the pleasure she meant to give them.

The fair was a gay sight. There were

flags stuck up here and there, and stalls full of toys and trinkets, and coloured glass, and sweets, and all kinds of wares.

Then there were swings, and boats which went up in the air, and guns to shoot for nuts, and shows of all sorts; and there was a bear that walked on its hind-paws, led by a man, and when he played a tune, the bear danced.

'How can they teach it to dance?' asked Grace, as she and Ruth looked on.

'Aunt says that they beat it till it learns to do what they want,' said Ruth.

'Poor thing! I don't like to look at it,' said Grace. 'Let us come and buy at the stalls, Ruth.'

'Ah, here is just what I want!' said Ruth. 'A brooch with a fine red stone in it. See how it shines! What is the price?'

'Fourpence,' said the man. And Ruth bought it, and put it on.

'Will you have one?' said the man to Grace.

'No,' said Grace. 'I can't spare fourpence, I have so much to buy.'

'What have you to buy?' asked Ruth.

'First,' said Grace, 'I have to get a trumpet for Ben, and a cake for Jenny; and I shall buy a halfpenny pipe for father, and one for Tom; they love their pipe. Then I want to get a doll, or some toy, for poor Fanny Marsh. She is in such terrible pain, and it would amuse her to have something fresh to play with.'

'Do you mean the girl who was burnt, down in the back lane?' asked Ruth.

'Yes,' replied Grace. 'I go and sit with her when I can, and should have been with her now; for she is so dull, you see, lying in bed all these weeks. But she begged me not to stay from the fair; so I said I would bring her home a fairing.'

'What a girl you are!' said Ruth. 'Why, you will have nothing left for yourself.'

'Isn't it all for myself?' asked Grace, smiling. 'Why, mine is the best part! I shall have the pleasure of giving. That is much better than having a thing to one's self, I think. Just think how pleased they will all be! Jenny will eat her cake, and smack her lips; and Ben will blow his trumpet, and Tom will give me a kiss for his pipe, and father will smile and pat my head; and poor Fanny will be pleased; and with sixpence I shall have made them all happy, and myself too!'

Ruth wished now that she had not spent all her fourpence on her brooch, but had thought of some one else, like Grace; but it was too late.

'Don't you think it is time to go home?' asked Grace. 'It looks as if it were going to rain.'

'No, no; not yet,' said Ruth. 'I want to look at the things on the stalls.'

'Well, then, I must go,' said Grace, 'for father will want his dinner. Good-bye.'

Ruth stayed some time longer in the fair. As she stood by one of the stalls where sweets were sold, some treacly stuff stuck to her dress, and made a great stain on it, in front. The more she rubbed it, the worse it grew.

'I will go home,' thought Ruth, 'and try and wash it out. Oh dear, what would aunt say if she saw it?'

As Ruth was on her way home, some large rain-drops began to fall, and in a few minutes a great storm came on. Ruth was drenched through by the time she got in. The green ribbon on her hat was quite spoilt; the ends were shrivelled, and all in streaks; it would never be fit to be seen again. Her nice violet stuff frock was dripping, and spotted all over; there was nothing

for it but to hang it up by the fire to dry. Of course Ruth's aunt saw it when she came in, and Ruth had a scolding for her vanity, which she long remembered. More than that, Ruth had to wear her spoilt hat and dress for many a week to come; for, as her aunt said, no other could be bought for her. And the end of all was, that when Ruth came to put on her 'splendid' brooch, the day after the fair, to go to school, the pin broke, and the bit of red glass that was in it fell out; for it was but a sham thing after all. And then, indeed, Ruth wished with all her heart that she had done as Grace did.

SHORT TALES

FOR

SHORT FOLKS.

I.

WHAT BEFELL PRIT.

BELL WRIGHT was a little girl of eight years old. One morning she woke up and found that she was nine years old; for it was her birthday. And what else should you think she found?

On a chair by her bedside there was a tall thing, covered with a white cloth; and on this Bell fixed her half-opened eyes, and thought 'That was not there last night!' Then she sprang up, and was just about to pull off the cloth, to see what it could be, when she heard a soft 'twit, twit!' come from under it.

She drew back.

'Oh nurse!' she cried, 'what can this be by my bed? It squeaks!—I am afraid to touch it.'

'Lift up the cloth, and see. It won't hurt you,' said nurse with a smile.

Bell took hold of one end of the cloth tenderly, and drew it off. And what do you think she saw? A dear little canary-bird in a green cage; and it hopped up and down, and cried 'twit, twit,' and put its head on one side, and looked at Bell out of its eye slyly, as much as to say, 'Who are you, pray?'

'Whose bird is this? and how did it come here?' asked Bell of her nurse.

'It is your bird, Miss Bell,' said nurse. 'Your mama came and put it in here when you were gone to sleep last night.'

'How nice!' cried Bell. 'A bird of my own! You sweet, you darling! Twit, twit, twit!' and she screwed up her lips,

and tried to make the same pretty chirping sound that the bird did. The canary chirped back again, and hopped first up, and then down, on the perches in its cage. At last nurse said, 'I think it is time for you to get up and dress, Miss Bell.'

'Now be good, dear Dick, till I am dressed,' said Bell, as she sprang out of bed; for Bell had been taught to do at once what she was bid. Though I am sorry to say that sometimes she was forgetful, she was never wilfully disobedient.

As soon as she was dressed, Bell ran to her mama's room, to kiss her and thank her for her kind present. 'Thank you so much, darling mama!' she cried. 'I have so wished for a bird of my very own, to feed and to pet.'

'I hope you will take great care of it,' said her mama, 'and feed it every day, for if you do not, it will die.'

'There is no fear of that,' said Bell. 'I would not let the pet starve, would I? No,

no, I should think not, indeed! What name shall I call it, mama? I thought of all sorts of names, while nurse was combing my hair. Love, Pet, Sweet, Chick—oh! and a lot more; but I could not make up my mind which to choose. What do you think, mama? Do help me; you are so clever.'

'How do you like the name of Prit?' asked Bell's mama.

'Oh what a dear little name! I like that very much. Prit! Prit! Prit! See, he hops about, and seems to know that I am calling him. Now I must take my precious Prit and show it to Susan, and to Jane, and to cook, and to all the world,—all my little world, I mean,—all in this house.'

'Cook will give you a jar of seed, which you are to keep for feeding it,' said her mama. 'And there is a small glass dish which you may have for Prit's bath.'

'Mama, do birds have baths as we do?' asked Bell, laughing.

'Yes, indeed they do; and they like it very much too,' said her mama. 'They wash their heads, and their tails, and their wings; and splash, and dip, and shake themselves, and have such fun!'

'I should like to see that!' said Bell. 'May I go and get the glass dish at once, as you are not dressed?'

'Yes, darling,' said her mama. So Bell ran downstairs to Jane, and asked her for the glass dish. Then she filled it with water from her mama's water-jug, and put it in the cage.

'Now Prit,' she said, 'come and have your bath.'

But Prit sat coyly on his perch, and looked at the dish for a long while, with his head first on one side and then on the other, as if he did not know what to make of it. Then he hopped down on to the edge of the dish, and dipped his beak in, and drank a drop or two, and then he looked

round at Bell as if to ask leave to take a bath. Next he popped his head into the water, and shook it; and finding that he liked this very much, he hopped right in, and washed, and splashed, and shook his wings, and sent the drops flying into Bell's face, and made such a fuss, that Bell laughed, and clapped her hands with delight. 'What fun it is to see Prit have a bath!' she cried.

When Bell's mama was dressed, they went downstairs together, and Bell took Prit, of course. After breakfast Bell's papa hung up Prit's cage in the window with a brass hook and chain, where the cat could not get at it, but where Bell could reach it easily when she got on a chair. She could unhook it, and take it off, when she wanted to feed it and give it fresh water. She had a jar of seed, and would let no one feed it but herself. Every day she took it down, and when cook had cleaned out the cage, Bell filled one glass with seed, and one with

water, and put in the bath for Prit. Then she played with her bird for a little while, and in time taught him to be quite tame; and Prit would hop on her hand, or her head, and sing a sweet song while Bell walked about the room; and if he flew away, as soon as Bell called 'Prit! Prit!' and chirped to him, he would fly back to her again.

So they were great friends, and Bell used to say that she should never love anything half so well as Prit. But, sad to say, Bell was like many other children in this respect, that when she had a new toy, or a new friend, she did not care much for the old ones.

When Bell had had Prit for a year, she woke one day and found that she was ten years old. And what else do you think she found, this time?

On the chair by her bed, she again saw something with a white cloth over it. What could it be now, she wondered? It was flat,

and did not squeak or chirp. She looked at it for half a minute, trying to guess, and then sprang up and pulled the cloth off quickly. And what do you think she saw?

A large wax doll, with wax arms and legs, and soft, real hair, and blue eyes, which shut of themselves when she was laid down. The doll was dressed in a long white robe, like a baby, with a lace cap on her head, and a blue sash, and soft blue knitted socks on her fat waxen toes. You may just think how delighted Bell was.

'Oh nurse!' she cried, 'come and look here! Can it be for me? What a love!—what a sweet! I have so longed for a doll, ever since my dear last one was smashed on the garden steps. My duck! my pet! Can you be really mine?' And Bell kissed her dear new doll, and kissed it, and kissed it, until her nurse said, 'Take care, Miss Bell; you will kiss all the colour off your darling's cheeks, if you go on like that.'

Bell laughed, and said, 'Then I must kiss her on the top of her head, for I *must* kiss her somewhere. Make haste, nurse, for I want to be dressed quickly, that I may go and thank mama for giving me this lovely doll.'

As soon as Bell was dressed, she ran to her mama with her dear doll.

'Oh you dear mama, how good of you to give me this doll! She is such a sweet! Just like a real baby; and oh, these wax arms and legs! I never had such a doll before!'

'You must take great care of her, for she will easily break,' said Bell's mama.

'Oh yes, indeed I shall,' said Bell. 'What name shall I give her? Don't you think Rose will be a good name?'

'Yes, I do,' said her mama. 'It is a very pretty name.'

'And she is a darling!' cried Bell. 'Oh,

my Rose, my precious child! How I love you! *None* but a mother can tell how much!'

Bell's mama laughed; but Bell said gravely, 'I am quite in earnest, mama.'

'I daresay,' said her mama. 'I used to love my doll quite as much as you do, when I was a little girl. What do you say to having your cousins Ethel and Fanny to come to tea with you to-night?'

'Oh, mama, may I? How nice! I shall like to show them my dear new doll! May we have tea in my little tea-set?'

'Yes,' said her mama. 'You shall have some cream, and cake, and jam for tea, too.'

'Oh, thank you—thank you! What a kind, dear mama you are, to think of all that!'

And Bell jumped up and gave her mama a great hug.

All that day Bell was taken up with

her new doll, dressing and undressing it, and putting it to sleep, and waking it up again, and taking it out to walk. Not once did she think of poor little Prit. Her cousins, and two other little girls, Jessie and Lucy, came to tea; and after tea they had games,—'Puss in the Corner,' and 'Blind-man's Buff,' and all sorts of things; and when the games were done, they all went home, and Bell went to bed. But she did not remember Prit.

The next day Bell slept late, and got up late, and was only just in time to learn her lessons for school. As soon as she came home from school, she ran to take up her precious Rose from her bed, and dress her; and she did not once think of Prit. At one Bell had her dinner, and then she went out for a walk, and took her new doll to show to some of her friends. They begged that Bell might stay and have tea with them, and her mama said she might. So Bell

stayed, and showed her doll, and played with her young friends, and had tea with them; but she did not once think of Prit.

Poor Prit! For two whole days he had had no food, and no water; and now he could not sit up on his perch at all, he was so weak and faint. He lay on the floor of the cage; he could hop and sing no longer. His eye was dim, and his feet stiff, and his heart had all but ceased to beat. And so poor Prit lay all through that night; and when the next morning came, and Bell for the first time thought of her bird, she ran to the cage as fast as she could, when she was dressed.

Ah it was too late! Poor Prit lay stiff and cold on the floor of the cage. His eyes were shut, and his legs stretched out, and he would sing no more sweet songs, and eat no more crumbs out of Bell's hand, and hop no more on Bell's head; for he was dead.

Bell stood by the cage, and looked at Prit as he lay there. She could not think it was true at first. Then when she saw that it was, she wept with a loud cry, which brought her mama to the room, for she feared Bell must be hurt.

When Bell's mama saw Prit lying dead on the floor of the cage, she said, 'How is this? What has happened to Prit?'

Then she saw that there was no seed in the glass, and no water; and she guessed how it was.

'Oh, Bell,' she said, 'you have let poor Prit die for want of food! How could you be so cruel?'

Bell did not speak; she hid her face and cried.

'Think what pain that poor bird has been in!' said her mama. 'While you eat and drank, and played, and amused yourself, it sat and pined for food, till it died. How long have you left it like this?'

'Two days,' said Bell, through her tears. 'Since I had my doll. It took all my thoughts from Prit.'

'Then I must take your doll from you, to teach you to be more careful,' said her mama.

She took Bell's doll and locked it up; and Bell did not have it again for three whole months. But she never forgot about poor little Prit, and often cried at the thought of what he had suffered through her carelessness.

II.

PASSIONATE DICK.

DICK FORD was a good boy in many ways. He would not have told a lie for anything, nor would he take what did not belong to him; he was obedient to his parents, and scorned to do a sly or deceitful thing.

But he had one great fault; and that was, that if he was vexed about anything, he would get into such a passion about it, that no one could calm him. He could not bear to be put out in the least; a word would make him so hot and angry, that his little sisters Nannie and Bessie, if they were near, would run away for fear

he would hurt them. This was a very sad fault, and led to very sad things, as you will see.

One afternoon Dick came home from school, and saw Nannie and Bessie playing in the field at the side of the house. So he thought, 'I will go and have a game with them;' and he put his school-bag in the house, and went towards the field.

'Here comes Dick,' said Nannie to Bessie, as she saw him run down the lawn, and clear the pales at a bound.

'He is coming to play with us,' said Bessie. 'I hope he will not be cross.'

'So do I,' said Nannie. 'I love Dick very much, but I do not like him when he gets fierce. I wish he would not get fierce.'

By this time Dick had reached them.

'Well, Dick,' said Nannie, 'how early you are home to-day!'

'Yes,' said Dick. 'There was a shorter class than usual, and I was glad of it, I can tell you.'

'What shall we play at?' asked Bessie. 'Gipsies, or Hide-and-seek, or what?'

'I know,' said Dick. 'We will have a shop, and I will be shopman, and you must come and buy.'

'What sort of a shop shall it be?' asked Bessie. 'Butcher's, or baker's, or candle-stick-maker's?'

Dick laughed.

'None of those,' he said. 'Let it be an all-sorts shop, like the one in the village. Everything you can get,—toys, and books, and dolls, and sweets, and clothes. Here are my gloves, to begin with, and my knife, and ball, and some plums I bought as I came along, and a ball of string, and lots of things, if I could but get them out!'

He turned out his pockets as he spoke; and Bessie clapped her hands and cried,

'What fun we will have! Come, Nannie, and let us get all we can.'

The two little girls ran into the house, and fetched their books, and toys, and all they could find that they might have. Nannie brought her white china cup, a great treasure, which her aunt had given her, and her keels, and her glass box with a 'Merry Christmas' on the lid, and her bird that squeaked when she pinched it, and her doll's teacups and saucers. Bessie brought her big doll, and all its clothes, and a little china man of which she was very fond, and her little tiny watering-pot, and some other things.

'This is famous!' said Dick. 'Now let us put them all out on this bench. Not *that* way, Nannie!' he cried, as Nannie began to place them. She left off quickly, for she was afraid that Dick was going to be fierce.

'How then?' she asked; and Dick, who you see liked to have his own way in everything, showed her.

When they had got all the things together at last, Dick stood behind the bench to be the shopman, and Nannie and Bessie went some way off and pretended to be ladies coming to buy.

'What is the price of this article, pray?' asked Nannie, as she took up her own bird.

'A shilling, ma'am,' said Dick.

'That is too much,' said Nannie.

'Not at all, ma'am,' said Dick. 'It is a very rare bird. See, it squeaks when you pinch it.'

'So would any bird,' said Nannie. 'I shall not buy it;' and she drew herself up, and looked very grand.

'Do as you like, ma'am,' said Dick.

'You are not a polite shopman at all,' said Bessie. 'What is the price of this, pray?' and she held up a plum.

'Twopence,' said Dick.

'No, that can't be,' said Bessie. 'I bought eight plums the other day for twopence.

You are much too dear, sir; I shall not come to buy at your shop.'

'Neither shall I,' said Nannie, and she and Bessie turned away as if to go.

They were in fun when they did this, but Dick thought they were in earnest, and he got quite angry in a minute.

'How dare you speak to me like that?' he cried. 'My things are not at all too dear!'

'Now don't be cross, Dick,' said Nannie. 'You know we are only playing.'

'I don't call this playing properly,' said Dick; 'and I am not cross. You have no right to say so!'

And he flamed up, and got as red as a turkey-cock.

'Then if you are not cross, pray why do you get so red, and speak so loud?' asked Bessie.

It was unwise of her to say this, but she said it without thinking, and Dick became furious.

'Look out!' he cried. 'I'll not play with you at all! Look out, I say!'

And with that, he kicked the bench with all his might, and over it went, and all the things that were on it were upset. Nannie's white china mug, and her bird, were both broken, and some of the doll's cups and saucers; and Bessie's doll had her face cracked all the way down. But far worse than this came of Dick's sad passion.

For poor Bessie was standing in front of the bench when Dick kicked it over in his rage, and it fell upon her foot. She gave one loud cry, and no more, for the pain was so great that she lost all sense, and fainted away.

Dick stood and looked at her for a moment in great terror, then he took to his heels and ran off into the woods. There he stayed till it was nearly dark, and then he crept in, and went to bed. He did not dare ask after Bessie, or show his face.

By and by Nannie came in to seek for him, and found him crying bitterly. She said, 'Don't cry, dear Dick; Bessie will get well again.'

'Is she much hurt?' asked Dick.

'Her foot is broken,' said Nannie.

'Oh, how dreadful!' sobbed Dick, 'and I did it!'

He cried himself to sleep that night, and sadly he fretted for many days afterwards, when he saw his poor little sister in such pain, and not able to move from her bed. All for one moment's passion! He said to himself that he would never—no, never—give way to such wicked temper again. His father did not punish him for it, for he saw that Dick was already punished. Dick did all he could to show Bessie how sorry he was. He used to come and stay with her instead of going to play, after his lessons; and he saved up all his pocket-money to buy her a doll, and one day after school,

he brought it in to her and said, 'I have bought you this in the place of the doll which I spoilt for you, Bessie dear.'

'How good of you!' cried Bessie, in great delight.

'Don't say that,' said Dick, growing red. 'You know it was I who hurt you, and I shall never forget it as long as I live. I think it will cure me of ever getting into passions again.'

'If it does that,' said Bessie, 'I don't mind it so much.'

We will hope that it did. For from that day Dick tried hard to conquer his passionate temper; and when Bessie got well, she and Nannie no longer feared to play with him.

III.

MAY GRANT'S BEES.

MAY GRANT went one day to see her old nurse, who lived in a small cottage on the side of a hill near her home. She liked to go there, for old nurse was so kind, and was always glad to see her. She found nurse on the grass plat in front of her house, with a pair of tongs in one hand and a tin pot in the other, which she beat with the tongs as she stood there. May could not think what nurse made this strange sound for; and she called out as she ran to the gate, 'Nurse, Nurse! what are you doing that for?'

'Come here, and you will see,' said nurse.

May ran to her on the grass plat, and saw some way off in the garden what looked like a cloud of bees. They flew to and fro in the air, and made such a buzz and a hum, that May cried, 'What are they doing? Will they come and sting us? Oh dear!'

'No, no; keep still, darling,' said nurse. 'They won't come near you. Just watch and see. They have left their hive, and want to find a new home. They will go to a tree, and cling to a bough all in a lump, by and by.'

'But why do you make that noise at them?' May asked. 'Doesn't it frighten them?'

'Folks say they like it, and that it lulls them, like,' said nurse; 'but I'm sure I don't know. Still I do it, as all the folks do it. I don't want to lose my bees. There, there! look, they are going to sit on that tree!'

'To sit!' said May.

'Yes, there! the queen-bee alights on the bough, and then they all cling round her, and hold on, like a great ball. Don't you see them? Now you stay here, Miss May, while I sweep them into the hive. They won't trouble you.'

Old nurse ran in and tied some crape on her face, and put on a pair of thick gloves; and then she took the steps, and with the hive in her hand, she climbed up close to the bough, and held the hive to the bees, which had all clung, as she said, in a great black ball, as big as her head, to the tree. She swept them down into the hive, and then set a board on the bottom of the hive, and turned it up. A few bees got out and flew round, but they did not try to sting her. Then she took the hive and set it on the stand where she kept her other bees.

'Now you have got five hives, Nurse,' said May. 'You had only four last week. Do the bees all do that? How curious!'

'Yes, dear, they do.'

'So then you will have eight hives full, this year?'

'Yes, I hope so. If I don't lose some of the swarms.'

'How can you lose them?'

'Sometimes they go a long way off, to a wood, it may be, or some distant place where no one can get at them.'

'Ah, I hope none of yours will go away!' said May. 'What wise things bees are! I am sure they must think.'

'You may well say that,' said nurse. 'I believe so too, when I sit and watch them at their work, and see all they do.'

'Don't they sting you when you sit and watch them, Nurse?'

'No, they know me quite well,' said nurse. 'I sit at the back of the hive, and look through the glass at them as they make their cells of wax and store up their honey.'

'May I see them?' asked May.

'Yes, if you like, dear,' said nurse. And she put a chair for May at the back of the hives, and May peeped in through the glass and watched the bees at work for a long time. Once or twice some of the bees flew round her, as if to see what she was doing there; but she sat quite still, and they did not sting her.

By and by it was time for her to go home. As she kissed nurse, nurse said, 'Would you like to have a hive of bees, Miss May? If you do, I will give you that swarm you saw me take.'

'Oh, thank you, Nurse, yes; I *should* like that! Bees of my own! then I shall have some honey. Thank you so much! When shall I have them?'

'In a day or two, when they are quieted down,' said nurse. 'You see they are in a great fuss just at first, when they get into their new house. Hear how they are buz-

zing and humming there, and see what a state they are in, all about the hive. When they calm down and go to work, I will bring them to you.'

'Thank you, dear Nurse,' said May; and then she kissed her kind nurse, and ran home to tell her aunt, and to ask if she she might have them, and where they might be put.

Her aunt said they might be put on the lawn, and that Dick, the man who worked for her, should make a wooden shed for the hive, and thatch it with straw to keep it dry.

May was in high delight at this. By the time the hive came, the shed was finished. It was made close to a tree on the lawn, and here May used to sit and look at her bees, and watch all the odd things they did.

'How hard they do work!' she said one day. 'They don't seem to stop at all, but in they come with their wax, and put it by, and off they fly again as soon as that is

done, to get more. I am sure they may well be called "Busy Bees."'

One day she saw a snail just crawling into the hive. The bees tried to stop it, but they could not; and in it crawled, and stuck inside by the door of the hive. There it stayed, and drew in its horns, and would not go out or in. So what did the clever bees do when they saw this, but all come round the poor snail, and gum him in with their wax, and made a small cell over him; and so there he was, built in, and could not come out again.

One day after that, a wasp got into the hive, and May saw two bees pull him out, while one bee stood on his back and stung him. Then more bees came round and stung him, and at last he died; and they dragged his body away, and pushed it off the edge of the board.

Another day there seemed to be a fight in the hive; and May watched, and she

saw some large bees dragged out by the small bees, and stung to death. May ran to her aunt to beg her to come and see them; and her aunt said, 'They are the drones. They will not work, but are lazy things, and eat up all the food which the small bees make; so they are turned out and killed.'

And May said, 'How strict the bees are!'

'You may learn a great deal from these small things,' said her aunt. 'It is God who has made them so wise.'

May took great delight in her bees, and loved to see them flying from flower to flower in the garden, getting their honey. Her aunt had put a large glass on the top of the hive, and when the bees had stored their honey in that—for they always begin at the top first—it was taken away, and May had the pleasure of seeing some honey from her own bees on the breakfast-table. Of course it seemed to her the best

honey she had ever tasted; and she wanted every one else to think so too.

Next year May's bees swarmed, and old nurse came and beat her tongs on her tin pot, and took them for her, as she had done her own. So then May had two hives, and thought herself quite rich; and she was able to give away some of her honey to her young friends, which pleased her more than having it for her own use.

IV.

TEA IN THE WOODS.

IT was a lovely bright day in June; the sun shone, and the birds sang, and the bees hummed, and the flies buzzed, and everywhere the gay flowers peeped up in the fields and woods. It was a sort of day which makes all things feel glad.

The woods at Royston were green and cool; there were such nice large shady trees there, and such banks of moss, and such ferns, and pretty nooks and dells, that there was no place like it on a hot day.

So at least thought Jessie and Charlie, and Maggie and Tom, and the little petling, Amy, who all lived in the large house at Royston, and loved above all things to play in these woods.

'It is going to be *such* a hot day!' said Jessie to Maggie, as they were dressing. 'Look at the sky! Did you ever see such a blue?'

'Just the very day for having tea in the woods,—early tea!' cried Maggie. 'Let us beg mama to let us, the first thing when we go down.'

'Ah yes!' cried Petling, as the little Amy was called; and she clapped her hands with glee, and then hopped on one leg all round the room.

'Make haste and dress, Maggie,' said Jessie; 'and then we will run and ask mama.'

'Oh my hair, my horrid hair!' cried Maggie. 'It is all in a tangle, just because I want to be quick!'

'No, because you did not comb it out last night,' said Jessie. 'There, don't tear it off your head. Let me help you.'

With kind Jessie's help, Maggie's hair was soon combed out, and her dressing finished; and then the two ran downstairs, while nurse dressed Petling, to knock at their mama's door.

On the way they met Charlie and Tom going down into the garden.

'Where are you off to?' asked Tom.

Maggie gave Jessie a pinch, and said, 'Ah, that is a secret!'

'Stuff and nonsense!—secrets!' cried Charlie. 'Come, tell us!'

'No,' said Jessie. 'You shall know by and by.'

'It's nothing, depend upon it,' said Tom. 'Girl's secrets are always some rubbish.'

'We shall see if it is rubbish,' said Maggie; and then the boys ran downstairs.

The children's mama gave leave for the tea in the woods; and Jessie begged that it might be kept a secret from the boys till it was all ready. Little Petling was told not to tell, and it was hard work for her to keep it to herself; but she did manage to do so. At breakfast Charlie said, 'Look at Petling! see how she is giggling!'

'Something very wonderful must be going to happen,' said Tom. 'Eh, Petling?'

But Petling would not tell, and screwed up her little mouth, and made every one laugh.

'She is afraid the secret will jump out of her mouth, unless she shuts it up tight,' said Tom.

Some time after breakfast, when the boys had gone to bathe, the little girls begged their mama to come with them and choose a good place for the tea in the wood. They found a beautiful one under the shady trees, with mossy banks on which they could sit,

and a nice flat place where the cloth could be laid on the grass.

When they came home again, their mama took them with her to the storeroom, and found some jam and cake; and she gave the little girls leave to go into the fruit-garden, and pick a basketful of strawberries, and currants, and gooseberries, for the tea.

You cannot tell what a business it was to lay this tea. All the afternoon Jessie and Maggie and Petling were busy about it; and the best part of the fun was the thought of how they should surprise the boys. But there was a surprise in store for them as well. For when it was all ready at four o'clock, who should come with their mama into the wood, but their four little cousins, Rose and Flo, and Basil and James! There was great delight at this, and a very merry tea they had; you could hear them laugh all the way from the wood to the house. Jessie was tea-maker, and did her part well.

When tea was done, the children carried in all the things to the house, and then had a good game of play in the wood. This wood was a famous place for hide-and-seek, there were so many good hiding-places in it. Petling hid once, and no one could find her for a long time. The rest all hunted right and left, and could not think where she was. They began to think that she must have run out of the wood, and were going to give her up, when all at once Charlie and Flo, who were looking about together near a clump of tall ferns, saw a tiny boot sticking out from them, and pounced on it, and pulled it out, and with it they pulled out the merry Petling, who screamed with laughter, and tried to run away. They said she was the best one of them all to hide.

Then they had a game of Fox, which was great fun. Charlie was the fox, and got into a hollow tree, which he called his hole; and all the rest were geese. They

put their heads under their wings, and went to sleep; and then the old fox came out slily, on the tips of his toes, and tried to catch one of them; and he pounced on it, and it screamed, at which all the rest woke up, and hissed, and ran screaming away; while the fox carried off the one he had caught to his hole. Then that one became fox in turn, and Charlie went among the geese.

When they were tired of this game, they had 'Follow the Leader;' and a pretty chase he led them, in and out among the trees, and up and down the banks and dells in the wood. They played merrily until the sun went down; and then their mama called them to come in, for the dew was falling. The little cousins said goodbye, and went home with their nurse; and the last thing the tired Petling said when she was being put to bed was, 'I should like to have tea in the woods all the days of my life!'

V.

LITTLE FUN.

OLD BESS was a poor old woman who lived in a small cottage by the road-side. She had no one to live with her, for her children were dead, and all those she had loved were gone; and as she used to say, it was very lonely for her.

Old Bess was good and kind, and always had a bright smile for the boys and girls who passed by her cottage on their way from school. They liked to stop and chat with her as she sat at her wheel in the porch, spinning.

There was one little girl called Minnie,

who was very fond of the old woman; and she would often stay and do what she could for her, fetch her sticks for her fire, and fill her kettle at the well, and take the broom and sweep out her room, and do many little kind acts, for she felt sorry to see poor old Bess so lonely.

One day, as Minnie looked in on her way from school to see how the old woman was, she saw Bess at the cupboard, with a loaf of bread in her hand.

'Just see!' she cried, holding it up. 'See what those horrid mice have done! I cannot keep a thing for them. They have gnawed a great piece out of my loaf!'

'What a hole!' said Minnie. 'Why, they have eaten as much as I should eat for breakfast.'

'Yes, indeed,' said old Bess. 'They eat my bread and my cheese, and I don't know what to do for them.'

'Why don't you have a cat?' asked

Minnie. 'They would run away fast enough then.'

'I would if I could,' said old Bess. 'But you see I have none, and I don't know who would give me one.'

'No more do I,' said Minnie. 'But now let me make your tea for you before I go. I like making your tea so much.'

She ran and got some water in the kettle, and poked up the sticks on the hearth, and put on a log, and made a blaze; and when the water boiled, she made a cup of tea for the old woman. Then she ran home to her own tea.

Some days after, as she was on her way to school, Minnie saw some boys standing by a pond with a bag. She stood still and looked at them. They took something out of the bag, and threw it into the pond. Twice they did this, and then Minnie went up close to them, wondering what they were about.

'What are you throwing in the pond? she asked of one of the boys.

'Only some kittens,' he said, and laughed.

'Oh, how cruel!' cried Minnie, much shocked.

'It must be done,' said the boy. 'We can't keep them all. We have kept one, and these three must be drowned. Here goes!' and as he spoke, he drew another out of his bag. The poor little frightened kitten squeaked and clung to his hand, as he was about to throw it into the pond.

'Oh, pray don't!' cried Minnie. 'Give it to me,—do. I know some one who would be very glad to have it.'

'There, take it then!' said the boy, giving it to her. 'You came just in time.'

'Thank you, thank you!' cried Minnie. 'What a dear little kitten!'

Off she set, and ran as fast as she could to old Bess' cottage with the small grey kit mewing all the way in her arms.

'There!' she cried, popping it into the lap of the old woman, who sat spinning at her door,—'there is a cat for you!'

Then she ran off to school, for she was afraid of being late.

You may imagine how surprised and pleased old Bess was. She stroked the soft little kitten as it lay in her lap, half dead with fright from being swung about in the bag and handled by those rough boys; and soon it lost all fear when it felt the kind hand caressing it, and put up its head, and looked about, and purred.

Then old Bess gave it some milk in a saucer, and the little kitten liked that very much, and lapped it up so eagerly, that old Bess thought it could have had no food for a long time; so she made it some sops, and the kitten ate them all up, for it was hungry, and then looked about for more.

When Minnie came in by and by, she

found the kitten at play with a bit of wood which it had got hold of; and she laughed to see how the kitten pushed it here with her paw, and then there, and jumped and leaped at it; and then in the midst of her play the kitten caught sight of her own little tail, and ran round and round after that, until she rolled over and fell on her back.

'What name shall you give it?' asked Minnie.

'I think you ought to choose its name, as you found it,' said old Bess.

'Then I shall call it Fun,' said Minnie; 'for it is full of fun.' And Fun it was called.

Now I must tell you what a piece of mischief Fun did one day.

Old Bess, as you know, used to spin wool on her spinning wheel; the wool that comes off the sheep's back, which is used to make warm stuffs and cloth.

Old Bess earned her living by spinning, and worked hard at it all day long.

Well, one day, while the old woman was gone out to feed her pig, what does Fun do, the little idle thing, but jump up at the spinning wheel and catch hold of the yarn, as the thread of wool is called, which she saw hanging from it.

The wheel was nearly full, and so Fun pulled and pulled, and finding that the more she pulled the more the yarn came away, she ran, and rolled over and over, twisting the wool round and round her, until she was fairly caught in it, as if in a net. Then she got angry with it, and tried to tear it off, and bit at it, and rolled about, till old Bess came in. And didn't Miss Kitty get a good whipping then! Old Bess thought it just as well to teach her that the wool was not spun for *her* to play with.

Minnie came in nearly every day, and

often had a good game of play with Fun. They had a ball of paper tied to a string, and many a good race had Fun after it, as Minnie ran along, dragging it after her.

As Fun got older she grew more sober, and did not care so much for play. She liked best to sit still near the cupboard door, and watch for mice, which was just what Bess wanted her to do; and soon she had caught all the mice in the house, and old Bess found no more holes in the loaves on the shelf. Then, I am sorry to tell you, Fun took to catching little birds in the garden, which grieved Minnie very much; and she tried to cure Fun of that sad habit by more than one beating. But Fun was not willing to be taught in this case; she liked the little birds too well; and I fear she still goes on catching them when she can.

VI.

DO AS YOU ARE BID.

'PUT down that knife, Master Harry, directly, sir!' cried Harry's nurse, coming into the nursery, where the young monkey was perched on a chair by the cupboard, cutting away with a large knife at a stick. He was only six years old, and it was not safe work for such a little boy.

'How dare you go to the cupboard and take out my knives?' asked nurse. 'Naughty little boy!'

'Haddy *not* naughty, Haddy good,' said Harry; and he got off the chair and played with his bat and ball. But I am sorry to

say, that as soon as nurse was gone downstairs, he pulled the chair to the cupboard once more, and he took the knife to cut his stick again.

This time he punished himself for his disobedience; for while he was cutting, in a great hurry to finish it before nurse came up, the knife slipped, and cut his hand instead of the stick.

The pain was great, and Harry dropped the knife with a loud cry. The blood flowed from his hand over his pinafore and frightened him even more than the pain. Nurse heard his cries, and came running up. She bound up his hand with a bit of rag, and took off his dress and pinafore and socks, which were all stained with blood. And then she put him to bed for his naughtiness, and there he had to stay all the rest of the day. Harry cried, and promised that he would not touch the knives again. Still, for all that, he had not

learned to do as he was bid. When that bad cut got well, he forgot his pain and trouble.

There was a large pond near the house, with fish in it, to which Harry was not allowed to go unless some one was with him. He liked going there with nurse when she took her work, and sat on the bank, on a bright day. He liked to watch the fish darting about in the water, and jumping up after the flies; and used often to wish he was a little fish too, that he might swim about as they did.

One day, nurse was ill in bed with a bad cold, and Kate, the house-maid, had to take Harry out walking. She was a new maid, and did not know Master Harry's naughty ways as nurse did.

'I want to go to the pond, and watch the fish jump,' said Harry, when they had been out a little while.

'I don't think you may go to the pond, sir,' said Kate.

'Yes, nurse often takes me there, and I *shall* go,' said Harry; and he began to run away from Kate.

Kate ran after him, and caught him, just as he was scrambling over the gate which led into the field where the pond was. He struggled, but she was stronger than he was, and pulled him down off the gate.

'Come now, be a good boy,' she said, 'and watch the carts go by with the hay.'

Three carts loaded with hay were coming down the lane. Harry watched them, and a new thought of mischief came into his head, but he did not tell it to Kate. They walked on, and presently Kate's mother met them, and Kate stopped to ask after her little sister who had been ill. Harry, seeing her busy, slipped behind her, got over the gate, and was running towards the pond as fast as his legs could carry him, before she saw that he was gone. He ran so fast that he could not stop himself,

for the field was on a slope, and the bank near the pond was steep.

Oh, what a fright he was in then! He screamed and cried, as he found himself going on towards the water unable to stop himself, and knowing that he must fall in. Kate and her mother came running as fast as they could to save him; but it was too late. A man called Sam, who had seen him fall in, ran too, and got Harry out of the pond, and carried him up to the house, where he was quickly put to bed. The fright and the chill made him ill for a long time; and while he lay in his bed, Harry made up his mind that he would be more obedient in time to come. But when he got well again he forgot his trouble, as he had done before.

One morning he asked his mama if he might go and play in the rick-fold, as the place was called where the ricks of hay were made, piled up from the wagon loads

which Harry had seen going down the lane. He had thought then how much he should like to get on the top of one of the wagons where the men sat; and now that the ricks had been made so much higher than the wagons, he took it into his head that he should like to get on the top of one of them.

His mama told Harry he might go and play in the rick-fold.

'But mind you are not to go up the rick-ladder, Harry,' she said. 'Now remember!'

Harry went into the rick-fold, and watched the men at work upon the rick. Some were on the top of it making it, and others put up the hay to them on their long iron forks. There was a tall ladder leaning against the side of the rick, on which the men went up and down.

By and by they went away to their dinner; and Harry, being left alone, began

to amuse himself by scrambling into one of the empty wagons, and jumping about in it. When he got tired of that, he caught sight of the ladder, and thought, 'I will see how many steps I can jump off it. Mother only meant that I wasn't to go up to the *top*, for fear I should fall.'

So Master Harry got up two steps on the ladder, and jumped that several times; and then he got up three, and jumped that; and then he tried four, but that was as much as he could manage. Then he went a few steps higher, and looked with longing eyes up at the top of the rick.

'I am sure I shouldn't fall, if I went up *very* carefully,' he said to himself; and then he went two or three steps higher. On and on he went, till he found that it made him giddy to look down, he was so high up; so he thought he must go on. At last he got to the top.

It was a very large rick, and the hay was all loose about the top; and Harry, to say the truth, was very glad to get safely on the hay, for he was a little bit frightened, and knew he couldn't get down again without help.

'I will wait till the men come back,' he said to himself. 'Jem will carry me down on his back.'

And Harry lay down in the middle of the rick, and fell fast asleep.

He slept so soundly that he did not hear Kate and nurse come calling all over the place for him; nor did he know what trouble they and his father and mother were in, when he could not be found.

The men had gone to another hay-field to work, and were not coming back to the rick that day; and Jem, on his way through the rick-fold after his dinner, had taken down the ladder from the rick, fearing perhaps that it would not be safe to leave it there,

and little thinking that Master Harry was asleep on the top of the rick all the time.

Well, when Harry awoke at last, and rubbed his eyes, his first thought was that he was in a very odd sort of bed. Then he remembered all about it, and how he had got up there; and wondered why the men did not come back. But when he crept to the edge of the rick, and saw that the ladder was gone, you may imagine what a state of mind he was in. He began to cry, and to call with all his might. But no one heard him, for every one in the house except the old deaf cook had gone out into the woods and fields, looking for him.

And there he had to stay till the evening, and very hungry, and tired, and frightened he was. He thought he should have to stay there all night, and oh, didn't he wish that he had minded what his mother told him!

The time seemed very long to him up there, and when at last he heard Jem come whistling through the rick-fold, he felt so glad.

'Jem!' he cried, from the top of the rick. 'Jem! *do* come and take me down!'

Jem, very much surprised to see Harry up there, put up the ladder, and carried Harry down.

A good whipping was Master Harry's reward for his disobedience, and that, and the fright he had had, taught him to be more careful in future to do as he was bid.

VII.

THE MAY QUEEN.

IT was the first of May, a bright warm day; and many a little village girl was glad when she awoke that morning, to see how blue the sky was, with not a cloud to be seen anywhere.

A high pole had been set up the night before on the village green of Ambrook, and made firm in a deep hole which had been dug for it. The school children had a holiday, and all the morning they went about gathering boughs and begging flowers to dress the May-pole. When they had got a good heap, the boys climbed up and tied

the boughs on, and the girls made wreaths of flowers which were hung on them, and made the pole look very gay. The best wreath was kept to put on the head of the girl who was to be the Queen of the May. There was to be a boy chosen too, as King, and he was to have boughs tied all round him, and stuck in his cap, and was to be called 'Jack-in-the-Green.'

'Who is to be the Queen?' asked Annie Bell, a big girl, who was at the head of the school.

'Rose Lee!—Rose!—Rosie!' was the cry on all sides.

Rose Lee was a great pet among the girls. Shall I tell you why? She never thought of herself. She was always ready to help others, and to oblige them. She was always the one to give up, and to be kind to those in trouble. Her heart was full of love to all about her; and this is the great secret of being loved. She had

a sweet, pleasant face, that never had a cloud on it; and the girls used to say that Rose did not know how to be cross. And as she was kind to them, you see, they liked to give her pleasure; and so they agreed to choose her for their Queen.

They drew her out, all shy and blushing, from among the group on the green, and set her on her throne, which was an arm-chair decked with boughs; and they put the crown of flowers on her head, and made her Queen of the May.

But there was one voice among the children which had not cried 'Rose Lee!' when all the others shouted for her to be Queen.

It was that of Jane Brown, who was rather a big girl, and a dull one. She did not like to see a little girl like Rose put first, and felt cross and vexed, for her heart was full of envy.

'Why don't they choose one of the big

girls,' she said sulkily to Molly White. 'It's not fair to choose a chit like that. I shan't play with them.' So she went and sulked at the end of the green, while all the rest played games, and were as happy as could be.

By and by there was a shout, and the boys came in a troop on the green, bearing between them in a chair a boy dressed all over with small boughs tied to his arms and legs, and stuck in his belt, so that he looked like a little tree with a face peeping out at the top. This was the Jack-in-the-Green. They set him down by the side of the Queen, and then they all set up a cheer, and made such a noise, that all the people in the houses round the green looked out to see the merry crowd about the May-pole.

But there was one who was not merry, and we know who that was. Jane Brown did not dance or sing, or join with the

others; she sat under a bush some way off, and felt more and more cross, as she heard the shouts and the singing; and at last she cried. She was unhappy; and who was to blame for this but herself?

Now Rose Lee, as she was dancing round, noticed that Jane was not there.

'I wonder where she is?' Rose thought. 'I have not seen her here at all.'

When the dance was over, the boys and girls sat down on the grass, and Miss Brooks, a kind old lady who lived near, sent them out some cake, and some jugs of hot tea, of which they were very glad.

Some of the boys cried out, 'Three cheers for Miss Brooks!' and all the children gave three loud cheers by way of thanks to the kind old lady.

Jane, sitting alone under her bush, heard the cheers, and wondered what they were for. She thought she would go and see. When she came near to where the children

were sitting, she saw them all with mugs of tea and lumps of cake in their hands.

'Where's mine?' she asked crossly.

'There is none left,' said Annie Bell. 'Why didn't you come before?'

'I can tell you why,' said Molly White. 'She was in the sulks, and didn't choose to come and play; so of course she has lost her tea.'

'It is not fair!' cried Jane in a temper.

'Cross Patch! Draw the latch!' cried one of the boys; and some of the others laughed.

'How dare you!' cried Jane; and she would have said more, but she felt some one pulling her frock from behind. She turned and saw Rose Lee, the Queen of the May.

'Here, dear!' said Rose. 'I have got a bit of cake for you; and you shall have all of my tea that is left. Sit down by

me, and never mind the boys. They don't mean to be unkind.'

Jane sat down, and ate the cake, without saying a word. She felt rather ashamed. When she had done, she said to Rose, 'How did you get the cake for me? I thought it was all gone.'

'So it was,' said Rose. 'That was half of my piece, and I kept it for you, for I saw you were not here, and thought you must be ill. Where have you been?' Why were you not at the dance? We have had such fun!'

Jane's face got red, and she made no answer. She had no wish to be Queen now; she saw that Rose was a better girl than she was.

'How kind of you!' she said. But she did not like to tell Rose how cross she had been feeling. Her ill humour was all gone, though. She played afterwards with Rose and with the rest, and wondered how she

could have been so stupid before as to be sulky, and lose all the pleasure the others had been having.

As she went home, she thought, 'I see now why the girls chose Rose. It is much better to be kind and good-tempered, than to be cross and sulky. I will not deserve the name of Cross Patch any more.'

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